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READING FOR LITTLE CHILDREN—PART IV

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EVENING IN THE CAVE

These were happy times in the cave.

In the long evenings Old Mok and Ab sat in the firelight together.

Then the old man began to teach Ab to make wonderful things of stone.

At first Ab sat near by and watched Mok as he worked.

Then the old man gave him a flint scraper to smooth the long spear handles.

Next he taught him to chip stone.

At first Mok gave Ab only the waste flint.

And Ab spoiled many a piece.

But in time he grew skilful.

He could make a flake with as sharp a point and fine an edge as old Mok himself.

Then the old man was proud of the boy.

He taught him to make scrapers and knives, chisels and spearheads of flint.

Ab was strong too.

He could make heavy axes and mallets of red-stone and granite.

He learned to chip from a piece of flint a pointed tool called a drill.

Now he could make needles of bone for his mother and bore the hole for the eye with his drill.

He found pretty shells and animals' teeth and fishes' scales.

He bored a hole in each and strung them on reindeer sinew.

These made fine necklaces to wear.

But there was one thing Ab never could learn to do.

Old Mok could carve wonderful pictures of tigers and reindeer and rhinoceras and bears.

This Ab could not learn to do.

But he would go into the forest and get the horns of the reindeer or elk.

When the men came home from a hunt he would beg the tusks and the shoulder blades.

All these he brought to Old Mok to carve.

As the old man carved pictures on the drinking-cups or knife handles, the boy would sit watching in the firelight by his side.

THE GREAT STONE KETTLE

Red-Spot was very proud of her kitchen.

There was no other in the valley so good.

She had the wood fire where she broiled meat on long sticks.

Then there were the hot coals and ashes where she roasted clams and oysters.

She covered fish with clay and baked it here.

But best of all was the place where things could be boiled.

Outside of the cave there was a great sandstone rock.

The top of this rock was nearly flat.
This was what Red-Spot wanted for a kettle.
So Ab tried to roll it into the cave.
But it was so heavy he could not move it.
Then One-Ear and Red-Spot and even old Mok helped him.

Together they rolled it into the cave.
And now the work began.
First Mok marked out a circle with his stone axe—a circle as big as a tub.

The stone had to be hollowed out within this circle to make the great kettle.

And Ab was to dig out the hollow.
He pecked and pecked with his flint chisel.
At the end of two days it had only begun to be hollow.

He tried to find a way to work faster.
He knew that he needed more weight on his chisel.
At last he brought a forked stick into the cave.
He bound the chisel into the fork.
He bound a heavy stone to the handle of the forked stick.

Now the chisel could not be driven upward when it struck the great rock.

He held the handle with both hands.
He lifted it and drove it into the hollow.
The stone weight made the chisel cut deep.
Great pieces came off at each blow.
In a few days the great stone kettle was finished.
Then Red-Spot was happy.
She was proud of Ab and his skill.

THE FEAST ABOUT THE STONE KETTLE

It was just at sunset that Ab finished the great stone kettle.

Now it happened that One-Ear had been hunting that day.

He had brought home the hindquarter of a reindeer

So they made ready for a feast.

First Bark filled the kettle with water.

Red-Spot dropped pieces of meat into the water.

Then she heated stones in the fire.

When the stones were hot she lifted them from the fire with tongs made of green twigs.

She dropped the hot stones into the water.

Soon it was bubbling and boiling.

Then a fine rich odor filled the cave.

The stew was ready to eat.

Each one rushed for a clam shell or gourd or deer horn.

With these they dipped out the stew to drink.

With sharp sticks they got the boiled meat.

Now and then little Beachleaf cried out for she wanted more stew and she was so little she could not reach into the great kettle.

They talked and laughed as they ate.

They praised Ab for his work.

When the feast was over they sat about the fire.

Old Mok told stories till Bark and Beechleaf fell asleep.

So ended the first feast about the great stone kettle.